



July 31, 2019

Honorable Governor Gregg Abbott
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Honorable Governor Abbott,

On July 21, 2019, numerous fire departments responded to a structure fire in a rural area of Hidalgo County, which covered five structures, some fully engulfed in flames. As a result, an 11-year old girl lost her life. On behalf of Hidalgo County and the cities of Alton, Palmview, Penitas and Mission, we express our deepest condolences to the families that were tragically affected.

We write to you as public servants to express how deeply troubled and upset our cities are with public comments made by Texas Commission on Fire Protection Commissioner Arminda Garza. On the afternoon of the incident, the Alton Fire Department responded to the call and the Palmview Fire Department responded with mutual aid, along with various agencies throughout Hidalgo County. Commissioner Garza arrived at the scene and started to deeply criticize various agencies on social media that were battling this deadly blaze, including disparaging comments towards agencies that were not on site. Furthermore, Commissioner Garza made very strong allegations without having any factual information that caused a tremendous social media frenzy accusing the responding agencies of negligence. We are seriously concerned that she is abusing her position that the State of Texas entrusted in her. It is with remarks such as the ones that Commissioner Garza made on social media that have now caused the public we serve and protect to question the agencies response and integrity. These actions are highly unacceptable and uncalled for, especially during an incident where there was loss of life. We have attached the social media posts for your review.

We respectfully ask that an inquiry be made, and Commissioner Garza be held accountable for her actions. We also ask for a public apology for the unethical and libelous comments made by Commissioner Garza, whom people perceive as a public servant. The apology should be to the agencies involved and to the families who were affected, especially those who are still grieving the loss of a loved one.

Thank you for your service to the great State of Texas and we would appreciate an inquiry to this matter.

Respectfully,



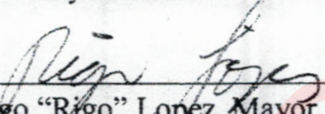
Joe M. Flores, Commissioner
Hidalgo County, Precinct 3



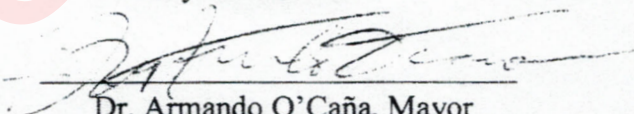
Salvador Vela, Mayor
City of Alton



Ricardo M. Villarreal, Mayor
City of Palmview



Rodrigo "Rigo" Lopez, Mayor
City of Penitas



Dr. Armando O'Caña, Mayor
City of Mission

cc: Tim Rutland, Executive Director Texas Commission on Fire Protection

**Arminda Garza**

2 hrs · 🌐

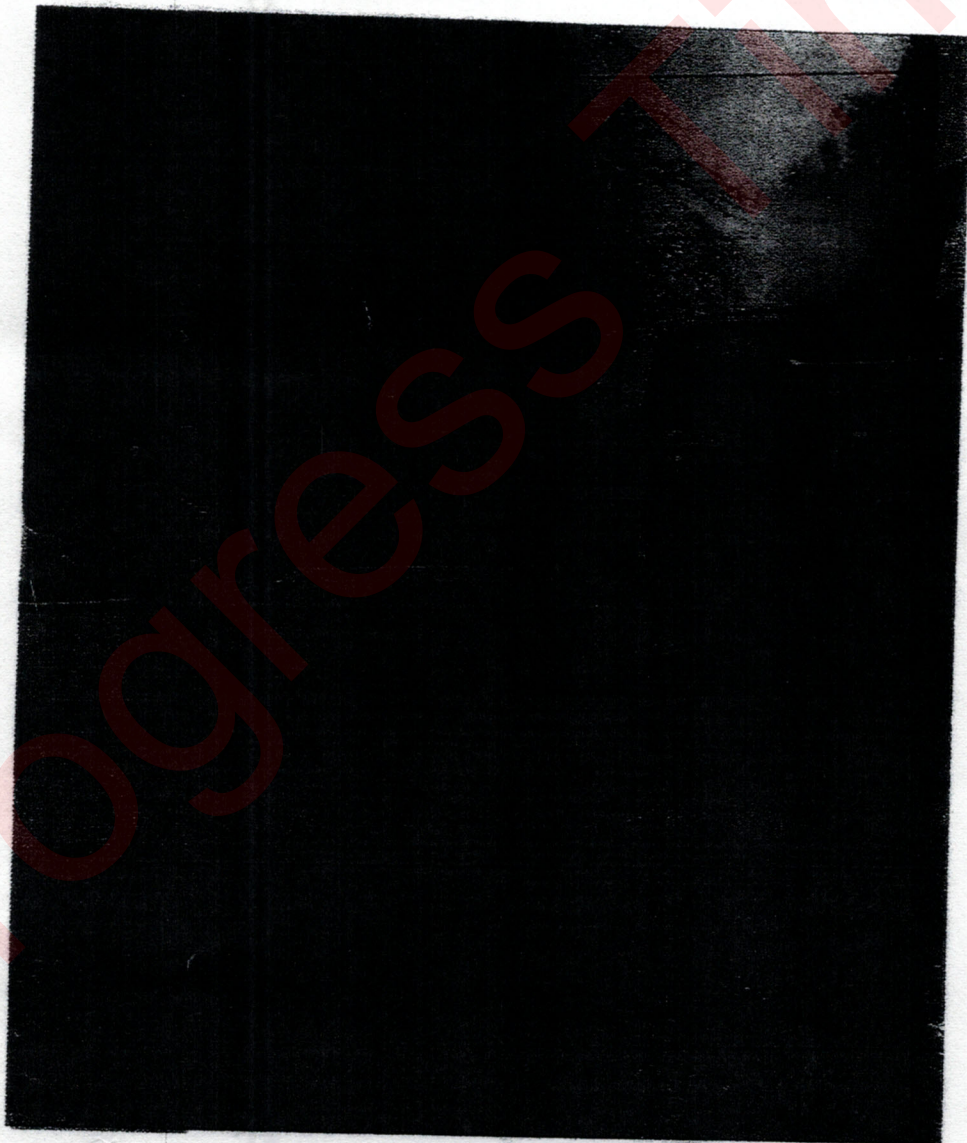
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I arrived to the scene at 4:32pm , I Prayed and asked God to protect the children.

This should not have happened, why did you ignore the neighbors plea to save the children ? Why weren't the tanks filled with water?

& To The Fire Department of Penitas, I'm more than disappointed in you! Where the hell were you?

Present at the scene, Palmview F.D., La Joya F.D., Alton F.D., Mission F.D., Edinburg F.D., Pharr F.D., McAllen F.D., Weslaco F.D., & Edcouch F.D.,





Arminda Garza's Post

unknown, and are faced by horrors. Our firefighter, are the hope we seek, when we are at the brink of losing it.

The emotions I felt yesterday, as I saw the home of one of my fellow residents burn, Have no words to describe. As I saw the flames ablaze, I Prayed for the safety of everyone. Sadness and sorrow hit me when realizing a child had left our world. As a mother, I can't imagine a day without my baby girl. My heart and prayers go out to the family for their loss. I will do everything within my power to ensure this never happens again. The life of a child should be protected

Our Great State of Texas has standard that must be followed to ensure, our firefighters are at their most effectiveness to save the most lives as possible. When lives are at risk or worse lost, due to negligence, it is our responsibility to hold that City accountable for their actions. It is our responsibility to ensure this does not happen again.

15

1 Comment 4 Shares

Like

Comment

Share



1

Like

Comment

Share

< 🔍 Arminda Garza

As your State Commissioner of Fire Protection, It is my responsibility to ask hard questions, to help ensure and encourage future fire safety across the State, especially in my own backyard.

My priority is to serve the people and not the interest of local politicians. I'm a public servant not a politician, I'm concerned about our people not political chisme.

State oversight can sometimes seem intimidating to people in our local government or people who are afraid of responsibility. Especially the local politicians fearing that bad press will prevent them from being reelected.

Unfortunately, local politicians who seemingly out of fear wants to silence the valid questions others and myself are asking, questions about the incident and conversations about how this may be prevented from happening again in the future.

So this is what I have to say to politicians that choose personal interests over public service. Shame on you, worry about fixing your streets, worry about providing the best for the citizens you were elected to serve.

Because the real take away from this sad tragedy is that when emergencies happen, we need every advantage and resource available at our disposal, including a department that follows orders, meets state standards, and has the best practices for the safety of our firefighters.

It is obvious that investing in fire safety infrastructure outside city limits and within our community is a safety net to all residents. The political grab of more populated regions, should not determine The quality of service. All life is worth protecting.

Regardless if they voted for you or not.

#REALwomenEMPOWERwomen #15Violations
#FunnvHowYouTanPennle #NoTIME4Negativity



← Replies



the state for not mandating hydrants
Where private utilities like agua are not
hel...

Like Reply

**Arminda Garza**

Esmie Garcia Esmie Garcia No
ma'am the City and The Fire
Departments are the same entity.
Now you're basically insinuating
this is The States fault?

The State has no control over
entities that are not regulated by
us. Suddenly the Governor
appoints a valley resident and
people want to justify elected
officials actions to the State.

Furthermore, The City of
Penitas is no longer a concern, I
refuse to address another favor
for favor city.

Like Reply

It isn't about that Arminda Garza.
It isn't about the City or who's who
at this time or the Valley having a
Commissioner or elected officials.
My personal concern is the reality
of the situation at hand. Peñitas



Write a reply...

